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ABSTRACT

Emphasizing the role of the school board, these guidelines for community control of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school operations also discuss transferring BIA schools to public school operation, community contracting for services, and initiating other than school board community participation in school affairs. The guidelines for development of a school board address the following: (1) objectives (promoting policy, developing parental-community involvement in educational programming, fostering community-desired curriculum changes, and exerting democratic rights and responsibilities); (2) school board establishment; (3) qualifications of school board members and voters (U.S. citizen, over 18, and an inhabitant of the area for 30 days prior to election); (4) election procedure legalities; (5) regulations re: terms of office and vacancies (annual elections, board appointments of vacancies, and no more than 3 unexcused absences); (6) duties and responsibilities of the school board (policy formation; general advisory responsibilities; and specific duties, including offering advice and assistance re: school problems, making reports on school needs, and representing the BIA and safeguarding school property in the absence of BIA employees); (7) organization and operation of the board (meeting times and places, open meetings, school personnel attendance, special meetings, quorum, parliamentary procedure, agenda, minutes and resolutions, strengthening the board's role, and funding). (JC)

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A SCHOOL

TO SERVE THE PEOPLE

Guidelines for Community Control of Bureau of Indian Affairs School Operations

Prepared by
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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It is the policy of the BIA to promote maximum participation in and control of services to Native people by those whom the programs serve. In the field of education this is accomplished through one or more of the following procedures. (1) Transfer from BIA to public school operation, (2) contracting for the provision of services, and (3) strengthening of School Boards.

1. Transfer of BIA Schools to Public School Operation

In accordance with agreements between the BIA and the State of Alaska, and procedures outlined in the report, "An Overall Education Plan for Rural Alaska", it is the policy of the BIA to cooperate in the implementation of a single system of education for Alaska. It is recognized that the responsibility for the education of Native students rests with the State of Alaska. The transfer of Bureau schools to non-Federal operation is being accomplished under the principle of mutual readiness on the part of the community, the State or Borough, and the BIA. No school operation will be transferred without the consent of the community or parents served.

2. Contracting for Services

Communities may contract for the operation of services to the school and for whatever phase of the operation they may feel to be desirable and consistent with Federal and State laws and regulations. The management of services through contracts is seen as a valuable training opportunity for the development of business and leadership skills as well as a means of making the school program sensitive to parental wishes.

3. School Boards

A. Objectives

A School Board should be established in each community where the Bureau of Indian Affairs operates a school. Such Boards can provide greater opportunity:

(1) for promoting a significant degree of local policy determination;

(2) for development of parental and community understanding, involvement, and pride in the educational program of the school;

(3) for fostering curriculum change in keeping with local interests and needs, and stimulating other improvements in the school program; and

(4) for parents and the community to learn about and to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities.

B. Establishment of School Boards

The Board ordinarily consists of five (5) members, but this number may be changed by subsequent vote of the community or action by the Board.

C. Qualifications of School Board Members and Voters

A person may vote at any election for School Board members, and on questions pertaining to the organization of the Board and may be elected to membership of a Board who:

(1) is a citizen of the United States

(2) has passed his 18th birthday

(3) is (a) an inhabitant of the area served by the school for at least thirty (30) days preceding the election in the case of community schools. Election to a School Board is not election to a civil office of Alaska or the United States, nor does it constitute employment by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

D. Election Procedures

Elections are to be held yearly. The School Board shall appoint three (3) election judges who are qualified electors and residents of the area to conduct the election, count the ballots and report the election results to the local Principal or Principal-Teacher, the Agency Superintendent, and the Juneau Area Director. Notice of all elections shall be posted in at least three (3) conspicuous places, one of which shall be the door of the schoolhouse, not less than two weeks prior to the election. The election shall be conducted by ballot in a public meeting.

E. Terms of Office and Vacancies

(1) Term of Office

School Board members shall serve until replaced by election or appointment. The term of office will be from the time of election one year until an election the following year.

(2) Voluntary Vacancies

Vacancies occurring due to resignation or the moving of a Board member from the community will be filled through an appointment made by the remaining Board members. Such appointment will be made at the next regular Board meeting following the created vacancy. The appointee will serve until the next regular School Board election.

(3) Involuntary Vacancies

Should a Board member, having been duly notified of the regular meeting of the Board, be absent from three (3) consecutive regular meetings without having been granted prior excuse by the Chairman of the Board, or upon the death of a Board member, his position will be declared vacant. A vacancy so created will be filled in the same manner described for the filling of Voluntary Vacancies. There are no restrictions on the term which a member may serve. Any of the provisions of this section may be modified by vote of the community.

F. Duties and Responsibilities of the School Board

(1) Policy

The School Board expresses the parents and community's interests, needs, and hopes for education. Through BIA officials at the local, agency, and Juneau Area Office levels, it makes recommendations and participates in resolving problems which are subject to local control. Although implementation of every recommendation made by the School Board may not be possible, all recommendations will be acknowledged and either plans for their implementation presented or a complete explanation provided with reasons why they cannot or should not be followed. When an answer has been received by the Board, it should be considered at the next meeting.

(2) General Advisory Responsibilities

A School Board member should honor the high responsibility which his membership demands by:

(a) Thinking first of the needs of the children.

(b) Accepting the responsibility of becoming well-informed concerning the duties of the Board, the needs and interests of the community, and the proper function of the school.

(c) Maintaining open communications with local, agency, and Juneau Office education officials.

(d) Keeping the community informed with respect to the actions of the Board and the program of the school.

(e) Making all recommendations as fair and objective as possible by clearly stating the problem, enumerating the probable causes, and proposing a solution.

(3) Specific Duties of the Board

Local school problems will be cleared through School Boards insofar as it is possible to do so. The Board can assist by:

(a) Offering advice and assistance on such local problems as school attendance, tardiness, drop-outs; the school year and school day; the lunch program; subjects which should be taught; facilities which will be needed for future construction; who might be appointed to positions open to local hire; changes which should be made in the school budget; the need for secondary, higher, pre-school, and adult education, etc.

(b) Making reports regarding school needs and conditions when requested to do so.

(c) Representing the Bureau of Indian Affairs and safeguarding school property in the absence of Bureau employees.

G. Organization and Operation of the Board

Once the members of the Board have been elected, they should meet as soon as possible and organize by appointing one member as Chairman and another as recorder. Additional positions may be created by Board action if needed and then will be filled in the same manner. After the Board is organized, it should adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of business. The rules are simply guidelines which set forth the manner of Board operations,

including provisions for meetings and notifications therefor, and conduct of meetings. A recommended procedure for conducting School Board meetings is given in the following section.

(1) Meeting Times

A School Board should establish a specific regular meeting date, such as the first Tuesday, second Monday, etc. It is recommended that meetings be held monthly.

(2) Meeting Place

Local Boards should also have a regular meeting place that everyone knows about. The meeting place should be large enough for guests, committees, and the general public who will attend (use of the school building is recommended).

(3) Meetings to be Open

All meetings will be open to the public unless a closed session is announced in advance.

(4) Attendance of School Personnel

The administrative head of the local school or his designated representative will be present at all meetings unless he is unable to attend or has been requested by the Board to absent himself from a closed session. School employees may not serve as members of the Board but function as non-voting resource people only. Exceptions must be approved by the Area Director.

(5) Special Meetings

Special School Board meetings may be called by the local school official or on a petition signed by at least two members of the Board. Such meetings should be held to a minimum and should be advertised and given all the publicity of a regular meeting. Special Board meetings should, if possible, be held at the regular meeting place.

(6) Quorum

A simple majority of the Board constitutes a quorum. No action may be taken in any meeting unless a quorum is present.

(7) Conduct of Meetings

The School Board should establish an order of business for its meetings. The following is suggested:

(a) Call to order.

(b) Roll call and establishment of quorum.

(c) Reading and approval of minutes of the previous meeting. Changes in, or additions to, the minutes should be made before the vote to approve the minutes.

(d) Reading of communications to the Board.

(e) Hearing of delegations. Scheduling delegations early in the meeting permits them to be heard without their having to wait for the Board to conduct other business.

(f) Regular report of the local school administrator.

(g) Unfinished business from previous meeting.

(h) Adoption of resolutions.

(i) New Business.

(j) Miscellaneous

(k) Adjournment

In conducting the meeting, the Board should be guided by simple rules of parliamentary procedure.

(8) Agenda

It may be helpful for an agenda to be prepared and distributed in advance to each Board member. The preparation of the agenda may be the responsibility of the School Board Chairman or the School Administrator. The agenda can help members come prepared for the discussions and keep important matters from being overlooked.

(9) School Board Minutes and Resolutions

Accurate records must be kept of School Board meetings in order that all actions of the Board may be a matter of record. The minutes should state whether the session was a regular or special meeting and the date, time, and place. The minutes should also show the names of all Board members and school officials present at the meeting. Copies of all minutes and resolutions shall be kept by the Board and the school as a part of the official school records in file number 806.3. As soon after each meeting as it is possible to do so, a copy of the minutes and adopted resolutions should be sent to the Agency Office and the Juneau Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(10) Increasing the Role of the Board

School Boards are encouraged to enter into Memorandums of Agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the purpose of broadening and strengthening their duties and responsibilities.

(11) Funding

Funds may be made available to the Board for various purposes including the provision of services to the school and school board expenses such as transportation to meetings, etc. Since, however, all of the school board members in Alaska's public and private schools serve without compensation, no funds are to be used as salary for BIA School Board members. It is also the policy of the BIA to encourage increased independence and community support of education through local funding of Board activities and administrative overhead wherever possible.

4. Education Committees, PTAs, etc

In addition to the duly elected school boards serving BIA schools, a broad base of participation in school affairs is encouraged. Parent-Teacher organizations, mothers clubs, and education committees of various kinds can be of significant value in the school program. Their value depends heavily upon the degree to which they are able to operate in harmony with the school program. It should be the objective of such groups to support and to develop a cooperative working relationship with the local school staff. Nothing can be more damaging to the school then for a feeling of distrust and opposition to arise between school personnel and the education groups.

A. Day School Parent Organizations

Groups of mothers or parents should operate with the permission and cooperation of both the school administration and the local school board. Their main purpose should be to help the school better serve the students. They can do this by (1) gaining a better understanding of the school and their children, (2) providing services not otherwise available, and (3) giving support and cooperation to the teachers.

For such groups to seek a larger role or one in conflict with the responsibilities of the staff or school board can be harmful to the youngsters of the community.

B. Boarding School Citizens Groups

(1) Student and Parent Involvement

Boarding schools serve students and parents from communities scattered throughout a wide area. Despite the added difficulties it is essential that parents as well as students be involved to the fullest extent possible. In boarding schools when the student body is essentially young adults, the student government is probably the most important voice that the school administration can listen to. The broad objectives of student government are:

a. To give to young people an opportunity to learn democracy by participating in it.

b. To give the student a voice in the operation of his school, particularly in the management of student activities, but also advisory in all phases of program operation.

c. To develop in the student, feelings of responsibility to the organization.

d. To establish a clearing house for ideas that may promote the general welfare of the school.

Ways must be found by each boarding school to keep parents in contact with the school. These should include:

a. Periodic letters to explain what is going on in the school.

b. Questionnaires seeking parental reaction to proposed changes in policies and procedures.

c. Encouragement of parents to visit the school and their children and to participate as resource persons in the school program.

d. Bringing in groups to perform a special function or task such as curriculum review, dorm policy recommendations, etc.

(2) Local Education Committees and Organizations

With its unique needs and special circumstances it is important that the boarding school seek to utilize all of the resources available to it. Among the most important of these has been the cooperation extended by the ANB through its Education Committees. These Committees or other group appointed by the local ANB Camp, in the absence of a parental school board, will be accorded the status of an Advisory School Board provided the following requirements are met:

a. A majority of the parents approve such an arrangement.

b. No school employee serves on the Board.

c. Membership is not restricted on any basis of race, religion, or sex.